

PRIVATE WATER ADVISORY COUNCIL
October 9, 2025
UWSP Schmeeckle Reserve Visitor's Center

Attendees:

In-person: Bruce Walker, Jeff Beiriger, Terry Marshall, Tim Jenks, Terry Farago, Chad Van De Yacht, Pete Chase, Tim Butterfield, Bob Aune, Dennis Crow, Jared Niewoehner (DNR), Marty Nessman (DNR), Bob Gundrum (DNR)

Online: Rick Peterson, Brian Broga, Scott O'Brien

Agenda Item: Overview of Current WGNHS Projects

Presenter: Pete Chase

Time: 5:52 – 23:45

Discussion Points:

1. Bedrock & Mineral Mapping

- Ongoing projects including Maquoketa Shale study.
- Strategic mineral inventory mapping due to rising importance of critical minerals.
- Assessment of mining waste piles for potential resource recovery.

2. Quaternary Surficial Mapping

- Projects in Green, Jackson, Price, and Trempealeau counties.
- Statewide glacial geology map completed.
- Focus on shallow well water quality issues in Grant County and landslide risk along Hwy 35 corridor.

3. Hydrogeology Projects

- Water table mapping in Rock County, Kiwani County, and Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest.
- Lake Superior wetlands restoration projects assessing groundwater contributions.
- Use of conductivity measurements and artesian spring observations to quantify water flow.

4. Digital Mapping Access

- Maps now digitally available, including aquifer thickness and sandstone data.

Decisions / Outcomes:

- Continue mapping projects with emphasis on critical mineral inventory and hydrogeology assessments.
- Utilize collected data to guide wetland restoration, water quality monitoring, and infrastructure planning.

Action Items:

- Maintain updates to digital maps for public and stakeholder access.
- Continue field assessments of groundwater contributions to wetlands.

Agenda Item : Pitless Adapter Issues

Presenter: Jared Niewoehner

Time: 24:53 – 44:44

Discussion Points:

- A consultant reported multiple failures in Maas pitless adapters used in high-capacity wells (4 of 18 units leaked).
- Failures included leaks through welds, stubs, and castings.
- Participants confirmed similar field experiences with Maas adapters.
- Failures have occurred across multiple adapter sizes (2", 6", 8").
- Manufacturing quality, materials, and workmanship cited as possible causes.
- Suppliers affected: Preferred Pump, Headwater, First Supply.
- Possible contributing factors: tariffs, sourcing changes, post-COVID foundry issues.

Comments & Feedback:

- Maas adapters have a history of intermittent problems and poor customer service.
- Some members use Baker adapters, which are higher cost but more reliable.
- Discussion of DNR's regulatory authority to disallow unapproved or leaky products.
- Proposal: DNR and the Wisconsin Water Well Association jointly issue a **letter of concern** to Maas requesting improved quality control.
- Recognition that manufacturer responsiveness increases when the **industry** voices concerns directly.
- Clarified that product approvals will eventually be discontinued under the revised NR 812 code, but DNR may still express concerns about quality assurance.

Additional Equipment Discussion:

- Suggestion to permit **bolt-through brass adapters** for steel casing, citing better seals and installation ease.
- Clarified that current code limits bolt-through adapters to PVC wells with attached screens.
- Concerns noted about overtightening and potential leaks on plastic casing.
- Discussion of rising **costs for Baker adapters** as an alternative.

Decisions / Actions:

- DNR to consider drafting a **letter of concern** for review by the Water Well Association.
- Industry members to continue **reporting field failures** for documentation.
- Explore options for **alternative adapter approvals** and updated guidance in code revisions.

Agenda Item: DNR Updates - ARPA Well Compensation

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 44:56–1:08:01

Discussion Points:

1. **ARPA Grant Status**

- 186 awards issued, \$5 million fully allocated.
- 62 applications under review; 11 waitlisted.
- No new applications being accepted.

2. **Grant Payment Procedures**

- Customers cannot prepay prior to award issuance.
- Post-award, customer payments eligible for reimbursement.
- Clarified that safe initial sample (off test pump) meets ARPA requirements if same contractor completes final install.

3. **Program Mapping and Impact Reporting**

- DNR working on map of awards.
- Report to highlight statewide impact to support future funding requests (anticipated completion: Fall 2026).

4. **Program Future**

- ARPA program concluding; transition back to Well Compensation Program (\$2M funding level).
- Discussion on maintaining or increasing funding to meet demand.

5. **Nitrate and Well Construction Concerns**

- Identified growing nitrate levels in karst areas.
- Suggested revisions to NR 812, including smaller casing allowances and adoption of 8x4 well standards (as used in MN).
- Emphasized need for practical and cost-effective construction standards to ensure safe water.

6. **Emerging Contaminant Grants**

- \$2.5M allocated for PFAS and manganese testing beginning 2026.
- Includes targeted statewide sampling initiative.

7. **Deadlines**

- Awards completed: November 2025
- Construction completed: July 31, 2026
- Payment requests due: August 31, 2026
- All payments finalized: December 31, 2026

Agenda Item: DNR Updates - Budget

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 1:08:14 –1:14:14

Discussion Points:

- 40% of Private Water Program budget derived from federal EPA funding.
- Federal budget uncertainty noted; state IT modernization request planned.
- Database migration issues acknowledged with apologies.

Agenda Item: Licensing / Continuing Education

Presenter: Bob Gundrum

Time: 1:29:12 –1:39:45

Discussion Points:

Renewals & Continuing Education

- Renewal applications were mailed to individuals who have completed their continuing education (CE) as of early October.
- Ongoing confusion persists—some license holders mistakenly believe completing CE automatically renews their credentials.
- Staff emphasized that renewal must be completed separately after CE completion.

Licensing Data & Trends

- Preliminary data for 2025 licenses was shared, showing potential positive trends:
 - **Pump installer licenses** may be increasing again after several years of decline.
 - **Driller licenses:** 5 new issued this year, with 15 active applicants in the rig operator training process (5 near completion).
 - **Six applicants are now exam-eligible**, with 5 testing within the next two weeks (including 2 heat exchange driller applicants).
- Updated graphs with final year-end data will be presented at the January meeting.

Continuing Education Availability

- As of October, many licensees still need CE to renew by **December 31**.
- This is the first year that the **Wisconsin Water Well Association** is not hosting a late fall (October) session.
- The **only remaining in-person CE opportunity** is **NGWA Groundwater Week**.
- Online CE remains available and is expected to be heavily used by those still needing credits.
- Members discussed the challenges and risks of hosting in-person classes (e.g., low attendance vs. hotel costs).
- The group agreed that DNR can help promote new CE opportunities if other organizations choose to host sessions before year-end.

Discussion Highlights

- Participants noted that the **busy drilling season** limits availability for in-person CE.
- Many favor online options for flexibility and cost savings, while acknowledging some prefer in-person settings.
- Appreciation was expressed for DNR's continued balance of both online and in-person formats.

Rig Operator Training & Barriers

- Key barriers include lack of experience, and the time required to complete the two-year experience requirement and rig operator training modules.
- Participants noted some applicants misunderstand timing—believing they can test before completing training.
- Sponsorship by a licensed driller remains required; several members agreed this requirement helps maintain professional standards.
- There was brief discussion about the lack of formal vetting or background checks for drilling company applicants; staff mentioned attempts to strengthen that process but noted administrative challenges.

Examinations & Certification (2026)

- The **2026 Operator Certification Exam Schedule** has been released and distributed via email.
- Exams will now be offered **every other month**, three times per month.
- Additional exam opportunities will be available at both the **Wisconsin Water Well Association** and **Rural Water Association** conferences.

Key Takeaways / Action Items

- Continue educating licensees on renewal vs. CE requirements.
- Add updated license trend data to January meeting graphs.
- Promote any late-year CE opportunities through DNR communication channels.
- Monitor participation and barriers in rig operator training and report back to council.
- Maintain exam schedule communications for 2026 certification cycle.

Agenda Item: Field Enforcement

Presenter: Jared Niewoehner

Time: 1:39:46 –1:44:44

Discussion Points:

Inspections

- 6900 notifications from January to September which is on par with past years.
- Core inspections made up approximately 12% of the total.
- Field staff are meeting goals for number of inspections.

Enforcement

- There have been 11 NON's issued to date. Most are related to reporting violations.
- Two cases have gone on to secondary enforcement that are also related to reporting violations.

Updates

- Tom Puchalski will be retiring from the Fitchburg Southwest region.

Optional Notification System

- New HiCap notification system has been rolled out.
- Notification given by scanning a QR code.
- Indicate where you will be and when.
- Notice is directed to correct DNR contact.
- Notice also for pump installing and pitless pressure testing.

Discussion Highlights

- Verbal contact is no longer needed.
- Scan the QR code to give notice and you are done.
- It was noted the communications with the DNR have improved significantly.
- A link to the new notification system will be provided

Agenda Item: NR 812 Rule Revision

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 1:45:36 –1:55:26

Discussion Points:

Effective date

- Natural Resources Board approval has been given.
- Anticipated effective date for revisions is February or March of 2026.
- How the revised code will be made available to the regulated community is yet to be determined.

Code revision presentation at WWA Conference

- Revised code content will not change before the conference in January.
- It was suggested that a separate presentation be given that focuses on the code revisions.

Discussion Highlights

- How the revised code is to be made available to the regulated community is yet to be determined.
- Final drafts will not be available for distribution for the conference in January.
- Questions were raised as to whether the Advisory Committee has been kept up to date on the status of the code revisions.

Action Items

- Track change copies of revised code will be sent to Advisory Committee members with an update on status.
- A separate code revision presentation will be planned for the conference in January.
- Hard copies of the final draft of revised code will be made available upon request.

Agenda Item: NR 146 Rule Revision

Presenter: Bob Gundrum

Time: 1:55:26 –2:01:21

Discussion Points:

NR 146 revision applicability dates

- NR 146 applicability dates are not tied to effective date of the code revision.
- Applicability dates are set in revised NR 146 code language.
- Licenses and rig operator registrations issued after October 31 and before December 31 will expire on the December 31 occurring after the license or registration has been in effect for one year
- Mandatory online renewal starting March 2, 2027.
- Starting in 2027, requests for exemption from mandatory online renewal will be accepted from January 1 to July 31. Exemption request approvals expire on December 1st each year.
- Those granted exemption from mandatory online renewal must complete continuing education and have attendance allocated to the DNR database by October 1st of 2027.
- Renewal by mail applicants who do not meet the October 1 continuing education allocation deadline will have their exemption revoked and will be required to renew online.
- A grace period of six months will be granted for completion of continuing education requirements. The license is expired, and the licensee shall not engage in activities authorized by the license until continuing education has been completed within the grace period and a renewal is processed to return the license to active status.
- An additional six credits of continuing education will be required for the license to be renewed for the next calendar year.

Annual training topic attendance requirements

- Everyone will be required to earn one code compliance credit and three credits specific to the license that they hold. The remaining two credits will come from electives.
- Pump installers will not receive credit for training specific to heat exchange drilling and heat exchange drillers will not receive credit for training specific to pump installing.

Agenda Item: New Business

Presenter: Jeff Beiriger

Time: 2:01:22 – 2:06:30

Discussion Points:

Discussion with WI Economic Development Corporation/Rural Prosperity

- The Office of Rural Prosperity is more focused on highspeed broadband internet than infrastructure.
- Expansion of rural development may face challenges in availability of professionals needed to provide services such as septic, well drilling and pump installing.
- Recent trends have shown a decrease in the number of qualified people who can provide these services.
- Dealing with emerging contaminants such as PFAS and the need to drill deeper should be considered in state budget planning.
- These things currently are not even on the radar in planning by Office of Rural Prosperity.
- More discussion is needed to increase awareness of these issues.

Agenda Item: New Business

Presenter: Terry Marshall

Time: 2:06:30 – 2:42:28

Discussion Points:

Coliform Sampling

- The need for discussion regarding an acceptable count test for coliform testing was emphasized.
- Obtaining an acceptable total coliform test is getting to be more difficult.
- Going back multiple times to rechlorinate and resample is getting to be a major expense.
- It is time to work with the EPA to begin discussions along these lines.
- How much resampling is really necessary based on the total absence coliform bacteria.
- With regard to having the same contractor installing the pump or having a different contractor who installs or replaces a pump, there would be some flexibility if there was a total coliform count allowed with an acceptable count number.
- The code requires the contractor to make every attempt to have an acceptable total coliform test.
- In real estate transactions, the lending agencies come into play as they will seek a test that passes code requirements.
- Because the occurrence of coliform positive tests is increasing, more discussion is needed regarding an alternative to current total coliform test requirement.
- There is a history of a coliform count accepted in years passed and in other states.
- Coliform is an indicator organism that may indicate the presence of viruses.
- Because the requirement comes down from the EPA, the discussion might be better taken up by NGWA.

- The EPA standard and is a public standard that applies to public water systems. It does not regulate Private Water supplies.
- If the EPA standard does not apply to Private Water, the question was asked as to why the code cannot be changed to allow an acceptable count.
- The Department of Health Services can be contacted regarding a change to the requirement in a future code revision.
- It may be difficult to explain why the change is needed to the NRB if it comes down to a code.
- There would be a need for data to support a change before presenting to the NRB?
- There are well owners that are OK with a failed test and others who will require remediation and a passing test.
- DHS might also be asked to issue a statement regarding failed tests and that this may not necessarily a health concern.
- The EPA may be asked to recognize that private wells are different and that the zero total coliform test on private wells may not always be achievable.
- The DNR has database with sample data, but there has not been any research to determine if there has been an upward trend in failed total coliform tests.
- Seasonal trends point to increased coliform presence with warmer temperatures.

Agenda Item: Meeting close

Presenter: Marty Nessman

Time: 2:42:30 – 2:45:47

Discussion Points:

May meeting minutes

- Meeting minutes approved with correction to the spelling of Hillsboro

Future meeting date

- Next meeting to be held at the WWA conference in Wisconsin Dells on January 7th, 2026.

Adjourn